University of Alberta

The Work of Eugenio Barba - A Post-Modern Feminist Critique

by

Frances Elizabeth Bitney ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Work of Eugenio Barba - A Post-Modern Feminist Critique submitted by Frances Elizabeth Bitney in partial fulfillment of the requirments for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the work of director, Eugenio Barba. The work discussed includes the Odin Teatret, a 35-year-old theatre company in Denmark which Barba founded and continues to direct. There is a focus on how Barba's early professional experience with Jerzy Grotowsi affected his vision for Odin; the International School of Theatre Anthropology which Barba also founded and his concept of Theatre Anthropology; and a close reading of two one-woman Odin productions, both of which Barba directed and co-authored with the performers.

This thesis aims to consider Barba's work from a more critical viewpoint than is normally seen in books on the Odin Teatret or Barba, utilizing a post-modern feminist perspective. A concerted effort has been made, however to remain considerate of Barba's goals and accomplishments in theatre.

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> Barba is essentially a creative artist, a poet both in the theatre and in his writings about it. This poetic quality calls for a careful reading of his ideas since he favors poetic metaphors over the more traditional intellectual approach of deductive logic to sustain his arguments (Watson, 18).

Introduction

Most of the accounts of Eugenio Barba's work which I have encountered were either created by Barba himself or by people associated with Odin Teatret. They all display a tendency to view Barba and his work in a reverential way. I will examine his contribution from a more critical viewpoint, yet at the same time remain considerate of Barba's goals and accomplishments. I will consider the theatrical work of Eugenio Barba, from a post-modern, feminist perspective, over its three decades and in its variety of forms. Chapter One will focus on Odin Teatret, Barba's first and central theatre company and their work, as well as the Grotowskian influence thereon. I will show how Barba has moved from an early interest in theatre as a political tool to creating the purely aesthetic theatre, which is Odin

Teatret. In Chapter Two, I will consider the International School of Theatre Anthropology, partly founded by Barba which hosts a series of workshops intent on the comparison of performance forms from around the world. Barba has written extensively on his theories behind ISTA and I will be looking at the validity of his concept of the transcultural recurring principles of performance. Finally, I will do a close reading of two one-woman plays by the Odin which I have seen: *Judith* (written by Roberta Carreri and Eugenio Barba) and *Dona Musica and Her Butterflies* (written by Julia Varley and Eugenio Barba) contrasting and comparing the two. These two plays, like the actresses who perform and co-wrote them, are very different yet still identifiably the products of the Odin aesthetic. I will discuss how these two women have internalized Barba's aesthetics and how this is revealed in their work.

To create a context for Eugenio Barba himself, it is important to include a brief professional biography. Eugenio Barba was born in Gallipoli, Italy, in 1936 (11). Barba's father was a soldier in Mussolini's army. Barba describes the effect of his father's death upon his professional life:

> For twenty-eight years I have travelled with Odin Teatret in the world of theatre. To far-off countries and remote places, to cities, capitals

and large towns. Where and when this journey will end I do not know, but I know that it started from a precise point, as does every adventure.

> The adventure begins with a child who was lucky enough to know deep sorrow. At the age of 9 he lost his father. It was a fundamental experience for him to be present and to see the slow death of someone close to him, in the course of one night. This is an experience which every child should have: to be at the death of a loved one I discovered what it meant to miss someone, to lose something essential. But at the same time I was liberated from a censor that restricted my freedom (Christoffersen, x).

As will be seen elsewhere in Barba's work, there is an exclusive focus on the aesthetic in this description. Barba describes the experience as "lucky" because it gave him a richer emotional life as a child. Next, he expresses his father's negative effect on his life, as a censor which to the artist is the worst thing to be.

At the age of fourteen, Barba was sent to a military college. During his freshman year Barba attended the theatre for the first time and he describes the event as extremely important:

> I was fifteen years old when I went to the theatre for the first time. My mother took me to see *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Gino Cervi, a very popular

> Italian actor, played the hero. But it was neither he nor the other actors who impressed, nor the story which they were telling and which I followed with interest, but without amazement. It was a horse. A real horse...its presence suddenly exploded all the dimensions which until then had reigned on the stage....In the theatres to which I went in the following years, I searched in vain for the disorientation that had made me feel alive, that sudden dilation of my senses. No more horses appeared (Watson, 12).

In a way, Barba is still looking for the horse - the thing that most surprises the spectator within the theatrical experience.

At the age of seventeen, after his schooling was complete, Barba decided to travel, partly as a reaction against his military college training:

> I longed not to integrate, not to put down roots, not to drop anchor in any port, but to escape, to discover the world outside and to remain a stranger. This longing became my destiny when, not yet eighteen, I left Italy and emigrated to Norway (Barba, 4).

He had also developed a keen interest in socialist politics, perhaps to rebel against his fascist father. He liked Scandinavia's welfare system and purposely took manual labor jobs, which his family rejected as beneath

him due to their class. He entered university in Oslo, Norway where he discovered the work of Bertolt Brecht, where Barba felt that he had found a model through which theatre could address politics. As a result of this experience, he decided to pursue theatre. He applied for and won a scholarship to study theatre in Poland in 1960. There, by chance, he met Jerzy Grotowski. They met in a bar and discovered that they shared several interests, including Eastern ideas and religion. Grotowski invited Barba to visit his theatre. After his first year of theatre school in Warsaw, Barba left his school and became an unofficial member of Grotowski's company, working in the Polish Laboratory Theatre as an assistant. He observed rehearsals, acted to inspire ideas for the company, did research and helped publicize Grotowski's work in Poland and abroad. One of his major contributions to Grotowski's work was the introduction of exercises inspired by East Indian traditional *kathakali* actor training (Watson, 12-14). His work with Grotowski greatly influenced the development of the Odin Teatret. The nature and depth of this influence will form the core of Chapter One.

In 1964, the authorities informed Barba that he could not continue to live in Poland, and when he tried to return from a trip, he was denied re-entry. He was forced to leave the Laboratory Theatre and Grotowski and move on with his life. Despite this separation, he

continued his personal and professional relationship with Grotowski. Years later, in 1991, in a correspondence with Grotowski, Barba would say, "We are united by the past" (138).

During a personal interview, Barba talked about what had brought him from Poland to Norway. He claimed he had met and fallen in love with a Norwegian girl whom he followed home. All Barba said about the relationship was that it did not last, but he stayed in Norway and established a theatre company, which he called by the appropriately Nordic name, Odin Teatret. Due to his status as a foreigner, he had trouble fitting into the existing theatre scene, a factor which influenced his decision to start the theatre company. He recruited actors who had been rejected by the Norwegian National Theatre School. During his time with Grotowski, Barba had had little experience working with the actors, so as new members joined the Odin, many of whom had even less experience than Barba, he obtained from them a list of relevant skills. One actor knew jazz ballet and gymnastics, while another had previously trained in pantomime. These became the Odin's first teachers, and because the actors and Barba himself had so little experience, the Odin concentrated at first mainly on training (Watson, 43). Training remains one of the most important aspects of their work today.

In 1965, after a year's existence, Odin finally

produced their first play, *Ornitofilene*, which was written for them by Norwegian playwright Jens Bjorneboe. While touring this production, Barba was approached by a native of the small town of Holstebro, Denmark. The town at that time was undergoing a change. Local officials had decided to bring more culture to Holstebro. Barba and the Odin were offered a yearly salary and a permanent home in Holstebro. They accepted, and the move was made in 1966. Only three of the original actors moved and consequently it became impossible to produce *Ornitofilene* again (45). The company remains in Holstebro, which is where I attended Odin Week in October of 1998.

Between 1964-74, the Odin worked with what they called the "Closed Room." They concentrated on training and performance creation, on developing new ideas about theatre, what it is and how to do it (Christoffersen, 19).

At Barba's suggestion, Odin began to do a new kind of work in 1974. Through the introduction of barter and temporary residencies in other countries, a new attitude toward the work developed which was termed the "Open Room." This was typified by a change of perspective toward the audience and its needs as well as increasing connections with theatre practitioners from other disciplines. The dates for the Open Room are from 1974-82(61). These trends in the Odin's work will be

discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

Concepts arising from the work of the Odin, as well as his own personal theatrical experiences, led Barba, in the middle of the Open Room period, in 1979, to found the International School of Theatre Anthropology, which is the subject of Chapter Two. Barba claimed that through ISTA, he wanted to "establish the transcultural aspect of recurring principles [in performance technique]" (Barba, 7).

In 1984, Odin Teatret began to reach out more to the wider theatrical community. Barba developed a group called Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium. This was an umbrella group for some individual work by Odin members, including what was originally dubbed "The Canada Project." Developed by the Canadian Odin actor Richard Fowler, this later became Primus Theatre. The International School for Theatre Anthropology was also a part of this new entity. Julia Varley's involvement in an all-woman theatrical project, the Magdalena Project has led to its being a part of the group as well. Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium can be seen as the ultimate product of the Open Room mentality in Odin.

Barba continues as director of Odin Teatret and ISTA today. He has served as an Examining Professor at the University of Arhus in Denmark since 1976. He has also worked with the following organizations: UNESCO (Director of International Encounter on Third Theatre,

1976; Director of International Encounter on Group Theatre, 1977; International Encounter "North-South" 1979) and the Danish Ministry of Culture as an advisor (1981-82). He acts as an Advisory Editor for *New Theatre Quarterly* (1985-present) and as a Contributing Editor of *The Drama_Review* (1986-present) and is on the Advisory Board for *Performance Research* (Blichfeldt, 2-3).

In October, 1998, I went to Holstebro, Denmark to spend a week at an event called "Odin Week" with the Odin Teatret actors. At that time, I found Barba to still be very much in charge of the Odin Teatret. The actors treated him with a certain deference, preparing the room for him before he came to lecture the participants and so on. The actors also stated that he continues to fulfil the same position as director of the company as he always has. When they explained their work development process to us, they always included references to his influence on their work, how he "edits" material to create a viable production, even with solo work.

Chapter One - Grotowski's Influence on the Odin

In this chapter, I will outline some of the ways in which Grotowski influenced the work of Barba, which in turn influenced Barba's work on the Odin. First, I will focus on how their shared interest in Eastern ideas affected both of their concepts of a professional ethic for theatre. Chapter Two shows how these influences also led to Barba's decision to found the International School of Theatre Anthropology. Barba has credited Grotowski with being a kind of mentor to him. This is clear, as Grotowski's influence on Barba's aesthetic has extended to such diverse issues as the creation of the concept of Third Theatre, which Barba uses to categorize the Odin Teatret's work; the position of the actor in the Odin; concepts created as part of Barba's Third Theatre aesthetic, such as barter; the role of the spectator; the creation of specialized terms related to methodology and technique specifically for use by the Odin; the role and importance of training in Odin, as well as the history of training in the development of Odin Teatret. It is clear from my research that the time Barba spent with Grotowski had a tremendous impact upon his ways of thinking about theatre, which in turn has deeply affected his professional work. In order to better illustrate Barba's aesthetics, it is important to

discuss his influences. The greatest single influence on his work with the Odin Teatret was his time with Grotowski.

The Influence of *Kathakali*

In 1963, while working with Grotowski's company in Poland, Barba travelled to India with the vague idea that he would be looking for things of use to the Theatre of the Thirteen Rows. He was hoping to see sacred sites, which he believed would be of use. In Bombay, he was told about a theatrical form called *kathakali*. Intrigued, he visited the now world-famous *kathakali* training centre in Ceruthuruthy. This centre, belonging to the Kerala Kalamandalam Kathakali Group, was established in 1936. During India's colonization by the British, *kathakali*, like many cultural arts, had been considered unworthy of the educated Indian. Central to the idea of *kathakali* is that it is a vocation, not merely a profession. This ethic became extremely influential for Barba as did the training process of *kathakali*. For this reason, I will detail the *kathakali* training.

In this exclusively male form of theatre, the young actor traditionally begins training at age seven and works until he is an adult. The *kathakali* student once trained in the *guru*-student relationship, where the student lived with and relied on his master for

everything from food to his education. Although this is no longer the case - the Kerala state arts centre that Barba saw uses a more modern instutionalized training method - the idea of this master-student relationship has continued to affect Barba's thinking about theatre. This will be seen later in this chapter in Barba's insistence on apprenticeship for Odin actors wishing to expand their ranks as well as in his conception of his own role within the Odin.

At the Kerala arts centre, the student is taken at an older age than was traditional, so as to facilitate his elementary schooling. He auditions, and if he succeeds, he starts his ten months of training at the beginning of the cool monsoon season in June. His day will start at five in the morning with two and a half hours of intense physical training and full body massage. After an hour's break, the student will move on to specific dance moves and the study of minor roles. This training continues noon. Around 3:30 p.m., the student moves on to gestural work with the hands, face, and upper body, as well as rhythm exercises. This last class goes two hours or more. This training will continue for at least six years before the student is ready to perform intermediate roles in *kathakali*. Only a master is able to tackle a major role (Zarilli, "Kathakali", 319-322).

Kathakali's twin ethics of intense discipline, and

reverence for the theatre as a vocation, became models for Barba. Upon his return, Barba introduced the twin ethics to Grotowski's theatre company. Later in his career, Barba would transplant the ethics to the Odin (Watson, 15).

The Influence of Grotowski

Barba's time with Grotowski was extremely important to him professionally, as he refers to his time with Grotowski as his "period of apprenticeship"(16). Grotowski's theatre served as a model for the Odin in some important ways. One major element of Grotowski's theatre company was the emphasis placed on a feeling of group identity among his actors. His co-founder of the Laboratory Theatre, Ludwik Flaszen, stated, "Theatre history proves that the greatest theatres were created when, in the course of practice, a sense of 'group' was emerging" (Kumiega, 8). During Odin Week, I found that this "sense of group" was still very important for the actors in the Odin. The most recent addition to the Odin's company of actors has been with the company for over twenty years. When I saw ensemble theatre pieces by the Odin actors, it was clear that they had worked together for many years. As one might expect, their ensemble work was seamless.

Grotowski's theatrical model was also based on ideas counter to those of mainstream theatre. He

stated: "our institution has invariably followed a path complementary to - and so in a way at variance with - current trends in culture"(12). Barba also has stated that the "essential character of the Third Theatre" (Watson, 20)- a concept which he created to express the place of the Odin Teatret in the European theatre scene - is "the autonomous structure of meaning which does not recognize the boundaries assigned to our craft by the surrounding culture" (20).

During the first productions of the Laboratory Theatre with Grotowski, the actor had a minor role. One of the actors, Zbigniew Cynkutis, observed:

> Up to this point [1962] the actor had been a man (sic) to be used during performance, manipulated, his solutions suggested for him. But during the work for Dr. Faustus [Grotowski] began to listen to the actors. He was listening, watching, trying to fix something almost impossible to fix, points that may not have been aesthetically interesting, but were important as part of the process (Kumiega, 131).

After this adjustment, the actor and his/her experience became central to Grotowski's work. He focussed on helping the actor to arrive in his/her unique way at a point where s/he could perform to his/her best ability.

The actor is at the centre of Barba's aesthetic as well. Actors are chosen for their attitude towards the

work rather than for innate talent. This reflects the Odin's professional ethic of theatre as a vocation, a life's work. When Barba was interviewed by a group of Odin Week participants, he said that he would consider taking on new actors now - despite the fact that the most recent addition to Odin was so long ago - if they were able to "seduce me with their enthusiasm" (Barba, personal interview). Barba claims that his focus is on how the actor can become an autonomous individual, free of teachers, writers and directors. This focus shows once again the influence of Grotowski's ideas about the actor developing her own training. However, despite Barba's statement of intent on the issue of the actor's autonomy, I found during my time with the Odin, that Barba's influence is still central to Odin actors in their process and the actors treat him with a special respect in the theatre. I feel that this clearly goes against his declared intention of freeing the actor and making her autonomous. Furthermore, it demonstrates a reliance on the *guru*-student relationship that Barba discovered in *kathakali*. He seems to have internalized this ethic to the point where it has become unconscious for both him and the Odin actors who are reliant upon him in the creation of their work.

As well as creating an actor-centred aesthetic, Grotowski:

wanted the actor to be elevated from merely one of

> several factors in a theatrical event to the essence of theatre itself: simultaneously there should be a reduction of the artistic means of expression extraneous to the actor. This basic premise became known as 'poor theatre' (Kumiega, 12).

Barba similarly shows a strong interest in creating actor-based theatre.

Grotowski was also very much interested in ways to change the spectator's role and make it more active. Grotowski's ideas in this regard were quite different from that of the Odin but still impacted on their work:

> How humankind may be changed and the life-experience of the individual improved is also self-evident in Grotowski's words and work. What is required is the healing of the mind/body split ... the eradication of the psycho-physiological blockages in the individual to permit contact with deeper impulses .... Grotowski also foresaw the possibility for this life-enhancing experience to be extended towards the spectator in a shared experience with the actor, and the progress of his work was continuous exploration in search of this possibility (Kumiega, 128-129).

Grotowski proposed that this could happen through the process of ritualising theatre and making the actor the "leader" and the spectator the "participant"(129).

Although the goal is very different for the Odin actor, the process of changing the passive nature of the spectator's position remains in the form of barter, which is also an extremely useful tool when the Odin find themselves in a country where there is little or no knowledge of Western style theatre as will be seen below. In this situation, barter allows the Odin to interact theatrically with their audience in a way that can be understood and hopefully appreciated.

Third Theatre

One of the ways in which Grotowski's influence on Barba is clear is in Barba's definition of the Third Theatre, which he created to express the Odin's position in European theatrical culture. The first and second theatres he defined as follows:

> [The first theatre:] the institutionalized theatre, protected and subsidized because of the cultural values that it seems to transmit, appearing as a living image of the creative confrontation with the texts of the past and the present - or even as a "noble" version of the entertainment business; [the second theatre:] on the other hand, the avant-garde theatre, experimenting, researching, arduous or iconoclastic, a theatre of changes, in search of a new originality, defended in the name of necessity to transcend tradition, and open to novelty in the

artistic field and within society (Watson, 19). As with Grotowski's theatre, Barba's concept of the Third Theatre was arrived at negatively, in opposition to the first and second theatres. Furthermore, it should be noted that Barba brings up the issue of representation in first theatre, exclusively. He notes that the first theatre is valued because of its reification of the ideals of the dominant class. Apparently, however representation is not an issue in the second or Third Theatres as he never mentions it in connection with these forms. As well as this, Barba states that the Third Theatre has no heritage. This statement is, however, directly contradicted by the large debt that Barba owes to Grotowski's ideas about the theatre.

Indeed, Barba has described his theatrical heritage in familial terms: "seeing himself as a descendant of Stanislavski, the 'father' of modern Western theatre" (11), an acknowledgement of the great influence Stanislavski's method had on Grotowski. Grotowski himself often spoke of the importance of this influence. In his theatrical schooling as an actor and a director, Grotowski was exclusively taught the Stanislavski method, as understood by his instructors. Later, Grotowski would question this training. He theorized that people who did not truly understand Stanislavski's intent had fossilized his on-going research - halted

only by Stanislavski's death - into a method. Grotowski referred to this process as Stanislavski's "assassination after death" (Kumiega, 110).

Barba also said of the Third Theatre that it was the target of discrimination, illustrating his decision to equate the Third Theatre with the third world:

> It is a theatre created by people who define themselves as actors, directors, theatre workers, although they have seldom undergone a traditional theatrical education and therefore are not recognized as professionals.
>
> But they are not amateurs. Their entire day is filled with theatrical experience, sometimes by what they call training, or by the preparation of performances for which they must fight to find an audience(Watson, 19).

In 1979, he went so far as to say, "The groups that I call Third Theatre...all live in a situation of discrimination: personal or cultural, professional, economical or political" (20). Despite his decision to make this comparison, Barba has consistently defined Odin Teatret explicitly as a non-political theatre company. While attempting to utilize the political situation of the third world to define Third Theatre, Barba rejects the responsibility of active political effort. I feel that there is inherent hypocrisy in the decision to use the plight of the third world to the

advantage of Third Theatre, while being unwilling to use Third Theatre to aid people living in the third world. Furthermore, in the case of Barba and Grotowski's work, there has been tremendous government-funded support. None of these Third Theatre practitioners has a lifestyle which can even begin to compare with that of the majority poverty-stricken third world population.

Later, in 1991, Barba reconsidered discrimination as the defining characteristic of the Third Theatre:

> Today ... it is clear to me that the essential character of the Third Theatre is the autonomous construction of meaning, which does not recognize the boundaries assigned to our craft by the surrounding culture ... an autonomous meaning for the action of doing theatre (20).

What then is the nature of the autonomous meaning that Barba was trying to create through the Odin Teatret? That is the question to answer next. Perhaps the answer lies in the focus on relationships that Barba postulated for the Third Theatre:

> The focus in third theatre is on relationships: on the relationships between those in a particular group, on their relationship to other groups, and on their relationship with the audience. This focus on the network of relationships in third theatre has its foundation in the individual and his/her role in the collective (21).

An important part of relationship-building for the Odin has been done with other theatre groups throughout the world which define themselves as Third Theatre groups. Long-term relationships with these groups continue to be maintained by Odin members. Many Third Theatres are based in small towns like Holstebro, or large centres with little financial, professional, community or emotional support. There is a great sense of isolation in the Third Theatre. Maintaining relationships among Third Theatres creates a feeling of support (21).

It is also relevant, to understand the underlying meaning of the Odin Teatret as an expression of Barba's theatrical ideals, to return to the issue of *kathakali's* twin ethics. As stated above, Barba helped develop Grotowski's idea of the theatre as a vocation, so in the Third Theatre, there is little differentiation between a professional life and a personal life. Barba insists on an ethic of collective creation, and therefore collective responsibility. Because of this emphasis on relationship, Barba and the Odin focus more on the process than on the end product of theatre. Here again the influence of Grotowski is seen on Barba. In Grotowski's rejection of the idea of an acting method, he considered the importance of the process/product dichotomy as:

> If...the product is given significance, then the application of 'method' in order to achieve a

> particular style or aesthetic is perfectly acceptable. But if the process is emphasized, then a 'method' will be creatively inhibiting, since no one method can be universal and cover all possible needs: each actor would require an individual method (Kumiega, 111).

An important part of the emphasis on process in Third Theatre, particularly in the Odin, is the concept of barter. Barter is a defining characteristic of Third Theatres and is closely linked to the web of relationships described above. Theatrical barter is much like other forms of barter except that the exchange commodity is performance rather than money. Third Theatre is once again linked to the third world by barter, as barter remains an important aspect of economic exchange in many third world countries.

As with other important aspects of the Odin aesthetic, barter began accidentally and gained its prominence in the company after its effects on the members was seen. It began for the Odin in Carpignano, Italy in 1974. Members of the Odin appeared in public in their training costumes. They were followed around the streets by townspeople and ended up in the town square where they were requested to perform. In order not to offend, they obliged. They performed mostly folk songs as well as some training material. Then, to the actors' surprise, the townspeople returned the favour,

performing some of their songs. Barba was fascinated by the intercultural potential of such an exchange, so he encouraged barter as a continuing practice for the Odin. Intercultural exchange later became the basis for the International School for Theatre Anthropology. The Odin began preparing material specifically for barter, including fragments of training, parades and clowning (Watson, 22-23).

Barter has become a regular practice for Third Theatre companies, which use theatre as a point of contact among cultures. Barter also plays a role in Third Theatre gatherings, as companies share methods, styles, and so on as a point of contact. Again, the product or performance is not as important is as the process of exchange. Barter and this importance of process over product calls into question the conventional theatre, which commodifies the theatrical product. How is it possible to commodify process? The emphasis in barter is on exchange, not the aesthetics of theatre, and barter is rarely performed in traditional theatre spaces with an inherent separation of audience and performer, and the emphasis on theatre technology. Barter also involves a minimum of rehearsal and a non-repeatable *mise-en-scène*. A former Odin actor, Erik Exe Christoffersen, speaks about the reason for doing barter as:

an attempt to use theatre in another way, in an

> organizing or political way: to create a situation which allows for contact between actors and spectators in spite of their differences and respective individuality and precisely because of the fascination engendered by difference(Christoffersen, 62).

Despite the inherent political leanings of barter, Barba keeps it in the aesthetic sphere, believing that its value lies in giving Third Theatre practitioners an opportunity to experiment with different performance situations and unusual audience responses. In Barba's vision of Theatre Anthropology, as will be seen in Chapter Two, the value of intercultural performance exchange is also aesthetic and lies in comparing performance forms.

The Language of the Odin

Barba and the Odin have developed their own language to deal with aesthetics, forms and process. One example is what Barba calls the pre-expressive. This term refers to the level of performance which makes the performer seem alive on-stage, the much sought-after presence. The pre-expressive exists prior to the creation of plot, character, situation or setting. These things that are expressive in nature are laid on top of the pre-expressive, especially in very codified performance forms; i.e. *Kabuki* or *Noh*. Pre-expressive

techniques require a greater than normal effort to achieve, they are what Barba calls extra-daily. In *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology - The Secret Art of the Performer,* Barba quotes an ISTA colleague: " 'We have two words,' the Indian dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi said to me, 'to describe man's (sic) behaviour: lokadharmi stands for behaviour ... in daily life ... natyadharmi stands for behaviour in dance' " (Barba and Savarese, 9).

Barba also refers to *'sats,'* a Norwegian word describing the moment just prior to an action when the performer's energy and concentration are focussed on the action that is about to occur. Again this concept goes back to his work with Grotowski who referred to it as "impulse to action"(Kumiega, 125). When I learned about the Odin's version of physical training with Torgeir Wethal (the only remaining actor who has been a member since Odin's inception) there was a moment of concentration and visualisation that occurred before I began my physical action. I begin my physical action even before I get into the first position in my score (set series of physical actions). I start by relaxing my body into a slumped standing position. Then, I take a step forward with my right foot and as I do so, my physical score begins. I use the energy of that step to bring my body up into a more upright position. Then, starting from my lower back, I prepare to take the first

position which has my balance forward on the right foot, my left foot back and I incline my head very slightly to the left while my eyes look right. This position with the inclined head is actually the first position in my physical score. The slumped body position is the *sats*, where I prepare mentally and physically to perform the score. Although my body appears relaxed, it is still full of presence (the pre-expressive) because I am in a state of *sats*, I am focussing on the action I am about to begin. Theoretically at every point between actions within the physical score, I am in a state of *sats*, as well.

In his examination of performance theory, Barba has introduced a cultural dimension to daily and extra-daily behaviour. He calls daily behaviour inculturated behaviour, with the emphasis on its cultural rather than social roots. He states: "Anthropologists define as inculturation this process of passive sensory-motor absorption of the daily behaviour of a given culture. A child's organic adaptation to the conduct and life norms of his (sic) culture, the conditioning to a 'naturalness'" (Barba and Savarese, 189). Again, this concept can be seen in Grotowski's work: "Grotowski examines the states of being of his actors; the relationship of these to functioning social conditioning [incultured behaviour]; the reciprocal effects of action/conditioning" (Kumiega, 121). I believe that

through his work with Grotowski, Barba encountered this differentiation but the terms are ones which he encountered in anthropological theory.

Acculturation, on the other hand, is the opposite, the process of unlearning these modes of physical behaviour and replacing them with other movement methods. This occurs particularly in codified performance forms where the pre-expressive appears in standing and walking positions which require difficult balance.

Barba calls the inculturation a colonisation of the body, which is considered to be a "natural" process as it is the norm in any given culture. Acculturation is a deconstruction/reconstruction process of colonisation. During the Odin training techniques, as with training in codified performance forms, the performer deconstructs her incultured habits and reconstructs the acculturated ones. The performer must be aware of her entire body. I recall Torgeir Wethal saying to one Odin Week participant, "Your feet are boring", during training. This participant had not been paying attention to his feet, which were still exhibiting inculturated behaviour not useful to the performer, particularly with regard to pre-expressivity.

This theory clearly infers a universalized vision of culture. In his book, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, theatre anthropologist Patrice Pavis includes

four working definitions of culture. Barba, however not only seems to use only one definition but also imagines that the process of inculturation acts in the same way in each one. Furthermore, Barba de-politicizes inculturation, neglecting issues such as the effects of class and gender.

Training

In physically-oriented theatre like that of the Odin, training plays a major role because of the great physical and vocal demands upon the actor. Training is the foundation of the Odin's aesthetic, and is the basis for their dramaturgical and rehearsal processes. It established important parts of the Odin's style during both the studio and open-air eras of Odin's work. Training still informs the creation of new theatre pieces also, the initial sessions of the Odin were purely training due to the actors' and director's limited knowledge. I asked Odin actress Iben Nagel Rasmussen about training and whether it could be considered the culture of the theatre company. She agreed that the idea was valid. Pavis says: "Actors also possess a culture, which is that of their own group and which they acquire especially during the preparatory phase of the *mise en scene*" (9). For both Barba and Grotowski, this preparatory phase manifests as training. The concept of training as Odin's culture establishes a

basis for Barba's inculturation/aculturation theories of the performer's body as well as clarifying its centrality for the actors. Because I feel that the place of training as the culture of Odin is so fundamental to understanding their aesthetic, I include a description of the development of training within the company.

Training usually consists of separate physical and vocal exercises. Barba feels that it is necessary to ensure that one of these forms does not dominate the other so they must be kept separate. The lack of skills that actors had when the Odin Teatret was first established has seriously affected what the Odin is today because of its effect on training.

When training began, the group met and trained three nights a week. Barba observed the training, and after the first few weeks, began to change the training regime, devoting half of each session to jazz ballet, gymnastics and pantomime, as taught by actors already familiar with these forms; and the other half to acrobatic exercises, taken from those done by Grotowski's actors. In Grotowski's work, these exercises belonged to the group called the '*corporels*'. Grotowski believed that the gymnastic challenge of the *corporels* forced the actor to use extra-daily techniques, or acculturated forms. Barba, however differentiates between acrobatics and the extra-daily:

Equally obvious is the difference between the

> performer's life and certain moments of great virtuosity in the Peking Opera and other forms of theatre or dance. In these latter cases, the acrobats do show us 'another body', a body which uses techniques very different from daily techniques, so different in fact that they seem to have lost all contact with them. But here it is not a question of extra-daily techniques but simply of 'other techniques'. There is no longer the tension of distance, the dialectic relationship, created by extra-daily techniques. There is only the inaccessibility of a virtuoso's body (Barba and Savarese, 9-10).

For Barba, acrobatics is not an acculturated form because it has no link, no "dialectic relationship" with the original inculturated form that the actor learned as daily behavior. In my opinion, this clearly shows that the two body techniques must be linked which suggests clearly that inculturated forms cannot be erased from the body by acculturating training. Instead, inculturation remains and the effects of gender and class are still written on the body, even as that body performs acculturated movement. Barba himself has never made a statement to substantiate the link that I see, however.

After working with the *corporels*, Barba began to develop his own training exercises with the actors,

including martial arts-style forms. One of these consisted of having two actors move around the room and have one try to touch the chest of the other with his/her foot (Wethal, *Physical Training at Odin Teatret)*. This exercise put the actors in a position of trust and forced them to work together. Barba sees a close relationship between martial arts and theatre. Martial arts, like codified theatrical styles, rely on acculturated techniques; indeed, in Japanese *Noh* theatre, the actor learns certain physical scores which are called *katas*. This is the same term which is used in martial arts to refer to a series of pre-set movements, which make up a form.

Barba then introduced improvisation into the exercise regime, these exercises were very simple and relatively naturalistic when they were first introduced. One example of the early improvisations is that the actor would mime baking a cake. Today, improvisation remains a major part of Odin trainin, and most importantly, the major source of its productions (Watson, 44).

At the end of the first month of training, sessions were extended from three and a half to four hours and Barba began introducing voice exercises from Grotowski. Grotowski worked with breathing exercises taken from sources like *hatha* yoga, voice resonators in the body, and exercises from Peking Opera. Part of each session

was set aside for voice work, setting the pattern of separating physical and vocal training, which remains a part of Odin's style. Later, Barba introduced *études*, a series of set movement patterns performed by all the actors together. He took this style from Meyerhold but soon discovered that, as Grotowski had said, exercises must be different for different actors, in order to be effective (44-45).

In June of 1966, after their first production, *Ornitofilene*, which was written for Odin, the company was invited to move to Holstebro, Denmark. Barba recruited new actors, who, like the original members, had little or no theatre experience so the more experienced actors taught the new ones, creating for the first time a teacher-pupil dynamic in training. At this time, Barba was preoccupied with adapting the *kathakali* training technique to his company, focussing on developing technique, building body strength, mastering certain skills and increasing flexibility (45).

In July of 1966, Grotowski and his lead actor Ryszard Cieslak came to Holstebro to conduct the first workshop at Odin and introduced a new method of training which drastically changed Odin's work. Barba developed composition exercises to reflect this, which focussed not on repeating certain skills, but on retention of a mental image. This was a major shift for the Odin. After the actors had reached a certain level in their

acquisition of skills, they could move on to this form of training. An example of a composition exercise is as follows: the actor might imagine the image of a snake as s/he moved through space. The actor would not imitate a snake, but merely allow the mental image of the snake to affect his/her action.

Certain members of the Odin still see the value in this form of physical training. This was an exercise employed by Odin actor Roberta Carreri in working with one group of Odin Week participants in October, 1998. Composition exercises did not include a pre-established series of movements; instead, the actors developed their own movements, repeating them until they had learned them precisely (47).

This is the form of physical training that Odin actor, Torgeir Wethal, taught me; we created physical scores, as they are now called and learned them exactly. One of Torgeir's methods to ensure that we knew our physical scores exactly was to have us teach them to one another using a minimum of words. This required us to think carefully about what movement followed which precisely. Otherwise, we would see our pupils do our score incorrectly. Torgeir insisted that the scores be repeated exactly. I learned the reason for this necessity. It allowed me to later change the score with ease because I never had to stop and consider what came next.

After this 1966 visit by Grotowski and Cieslak, when Barba noticed that the actors all did exercises very differently in spite of the fact that they all had the same skills, he decided that the difference was due to personal rhythm. Barba has a theory that each actor has a personal rhythm which affects how s/he performs actions. This is individual to the actor. In order to work with this rhythm in his actors, he introduced exercises which focussed on the actors' individual rhythms (48).

In the 1970's, as new actors joined, they were taught a specific repertory of exercises, and Barba drastically extended training times so that the actors worked 6-8 hours per day, six days a week. Barba had decided on this gruelling schedule in the belief that training could be used to help enhance endurance. He noticed a mental aspect to this, which he called muscular psyche and Torgeir confirmed this for me during Odin Week by telling the participants that training was more a mental process than a physical one. Barba had decided now that the point was to train the mind, not the body, and through this process of pushing the actors to their physical limits, he produced breakthroughs among them which otherwise would not have occurred. One such instance was when Iben Nagel Rasmussen achieved a vocal breakthrough which allowed her to use her voice as never before. To this day, her voice is one of her

greatest tools. When I saw her perform in October, 1998, I was deeply impressed by the incredible vocal range which she exhibited. While *Judith* as performed by Roberta Carreri was a physical tour de force, Rasmussen's *White as Jasmine* was a vocal tour de force. She said of this breakthrough: "From here I had a beginning, a place to discover who I am as an actress" (49).

Around 1972, the training focus shifted from learning skills (product) to emphasizing process, and there was a process of individualisation in training. "[Barba] now allowed the actors to explore whatever they chose out of discussion with him and/or their colleagues" (52). He also began to have more commitments outside the Odin including teaching, being on the board of the Theatre of Nations festival, and organising the premiere Third Theatre gathering. The fact that he was organising this gathering suggests that he was instrumental in defining who would be considered a Third Theatre and who would not. These outside commitments and the greater individualisation of training led to Barba's gradual exit from the studio. In 1974, Barba organised residencies for Odin in Italy. The Odin began to perform their training and rehearsals for *Come! And the Day Will be Ours* outdoors. At this time, Rasmussen and another Odin actor began using sticks and drums in their training. Barba felt this was

a response to working outdoors and encouraged the other actors to do so as well. This resulted in the training costumes, which attracted the Carpignano Italy crowd and led to the first Odin barter. Odin called these props "requisites," in working with the requisites, the actors used them as a partner, an extension of the body and played with the differences between the inculturated use of the requisite and acculturating it. In creating acculturated uses for the requisite, the Odin actor again would be inculturating herself into her theatre company. Through this process each actor explored the creative possibilities of her requisite. Rasmussen called this process "searching for the life in the requisite" (53).

Through the creation of the barter process in Italy, the Odin actors began to develop productions specifically for barter situations, including *The Book of Dances, Anabasis* and *The Million*. The development of these productions forced the actors to learn new skills. For example, in order to be seen in large crowds, the actors began to work with stilts, something they had never done before. The development of these skills, however, was done apart from training sessions where the focus had moved to process, including mental process - and away from skill development. Only once a skill had been learned well enough, it could be used in training (54). It can be said also that the focus had moved from

acculturation in developing new body techniques or traditional theatrical skills to inculturation into the theatre company.

The next major change in Odin training technique was a reassertion of the teacher-student relationship dating back to the move to Holstebro when new actors were recruited. The way that Odin worked at this time was to develop and rehearse a new piece, which would take about 12-18 months. Then they would tour the piece and when the tour was finished, the company would temporarily disband for a short time. Then they would come back together to create a new piece. During tours, Barba would find and recruit new members, who would be trained between tours. When the company reformed to start their new production, the new actors would be included in the process. In Italy in 1974, Barba felt that he had a committed company that was reliable and well trained. He therefore decided to close the doors to new actors and cease recruiting (54).

However rather than closing the doors to the Odin entirely at this time, Barba created something that he termed the International Brigade. This group was made up of actors from other companies who had shown an interest in Odin's process. They trained with Odin actors and Barba himself for eight-month periods and they were expected to take their learning back to their respective countries. He refused, however, to let those

who asked to remain, stay with and join Odin. One Odin actor, Roberta Carreri, did not agree with this decision, so she adopted two actors, Toni Cots and Sylvia Ricciardelli, as apprentices. She took responsibility not just for teaching them, but for housing and feeding them as well. This reflects the traditional master-student relationship found in many Asian performance traditions. This is known as *guru-kula*, or study in the master's home. Tage Larsen, another Odin actor also adopted two actors, Francis Pardeilhan and Julia Varley. Barba chose to ignore the apprentices. After they had learned some basic skills, the apprentices were invited to join collective training sessions with the other Odin actors. In these sessions they also saw Barba. In 1976-77, the apprentices began working on a production formerly performed by the Odin actors. It was a clown piece called *Johann Sebastian Bach*, which had originally been developed for barter. Before they were able to perform it, Barba insisted on perfecting it with them. They performed and toured this show under the group name of Hogin, which in Norse mythology is one of the birds that fly around the Norse god Odin. Barba followed their success with this production as well as their work in the training studio. He was so impressed that he invited them to join with the rest of the Odin to create their next production, *Anabasis*. By mid-1977, the apprentices were full

members of the Odin, fully inculturated as Odin actors (56-57). This apprentice system implicitly contains a hierarchical relationship between the "real" Odin actors and their apprentices, particularly in the example of the Hogin company which was a secondary group, tolerated by Barba until they proved the level of their expertise and inculturation.

The next change in training came during this time as company members developed outside interests and Barba was largely absent from training. Barba removed himself from training as his commitments outside of the Odin became more numerous. Likewise, he clearly felt that he could trust the actors with their own training. I believe that he saw enough of his aesthetic reflected in their work to satisfy him that his presence was not required in training. Many members began to train only when and if they wished. Regular training schedules were abandoned entirely, and it was not until the introduction of the apprentices as full members, that the regular actors returned to the training studio.

Gradually in training, the actors moved away from using narrative and images to a more psycho-physical form focussed on energy. They were attempting to create and isolate a pre-expressive state in the training studio. This new focus was partly due to a renewed interest among the actors in other cultures' forms of performance, particularly those with an Asian influence.

They incorporated the old composition exercises but abandoned the image aspect and focussed instead on creating new acculturated body positions (57).

In 1978, Barba called a halt to rehearsals for *Brecht's Ashes 2* to have the actors investigate a performance technique with which they were not familiar. Some of the actors went to India to study *kathakali*, while others went to Bali to study traditional dance styles *baris* and *legong*. The most influential of these researches was those done by these actors. They learned only the physical movements rather than their meanings within their given cultures as due to the time constraints of only a few months of study. Thus, Barba first saw the effectiveness of removing a performance form from its cultural context. This was to influence his work with ISTA. The focus in training became codification of movement, physical precision and energy. The new form of training session which resulted was known as the "fishtank". As they began to work more with energy, the actors noticed that the work of their fellows around them was influencing their actions more than they had before. They incorporated the image of a fishtank to explain this; as the actors worked, they were like fish, each exploring their own territory but allowing the actions of those around them moving through the water to influence them. The focus in training moved from the individual back to the group. A response

to this added influence was to increase the importance of repetition in their work. The term "*fastleppe*" meaning "repeat" in Norwegian, became a part of training (58-60).

Following this, the importance of Asian forms began to manifest differently in Odin training. Underlying principles from Asian training techniques have been incorporated into Odin's training. Barba claimed that he first became fascinated by Asian performance styles because of their ability to project a certain presence onto the stage. He began researching Asian theatre with the express aim of researching the source of this presence (pre-expressivity):

> I couldn't understand how Oriental actors, even during a cold, technical demonstration, always retained a very striking presence which inevitably captures one's attention. In such a situation the actor is not interpreting or expressing anything. Yet he (sic) seems to have a kernel of radiating energy, evocative, knowledgeable, and yet unpremeditated, capturing our attention and magnetising our senses. For years I thought it was a question of technique, understood as skill. But in trying to go beyond this habitual definition, I realised that what we call technique is in fact a particular use of the body (61).

Barba reasoned that the greatest value for western

actors was to have Asian ideas to explore their training (i.e. the Odin's professional ethic). Barba learned two main techniques which he felt were relevant to Odin training: the use of acculturated forms to break inculturated ones; and the codification of principles which dictate the use of energy during performance (63).

As Carreri has said, "training is a constant process of becoming" (63). This statement reflects the fact that the training is in a constant state of change; for example, when Torgeir taught us how to create a physical score, he stated that ten years ago, he would have taught this differently, and, indeed, may not have taught us this skill at all (41-60). During Odin Week, the actors carefully explained how they currently use training to create productions, by using physical scores developed in training to create "material", which they bring to an initial rehearsal. Material can also include vocal work, text, costume pieces, character ideas and requisite use. This is presented to the other actors and Barba. The other actors may comment on the material, but the final decision is Barba's. He puts the material together with that of the other actors and his own ideas for this production. He carefully edits material, suggesting that the actors perform it in different ways and with different images. This emphasizes the importance of being precise and exact in

one's material. If the actor knows her score precisely, she can easily modify it without stopping to think about what comes next. Eventually this process leads to production.

Throughout the process of creating the training techniques and experimenting with their effects on performance, throughout the open and closed room sessions of Odin the importance of Barba's purely aesthetic goal is clear. His early interest in Asian theatrical forms was very aesthetic and influenced him to require of his actors a near-religious devotion to theatre as art. Indeed, in the traditional *guru*-student relationship - which Barba mimics in his relationship with the Odin actors - there is a religious aspect wherein the student is expected to demonstrate his/her devotion to the *guru* as well as to the art form s/he is studying (Barba and Savarese, 30-33).

This process has led Barba away from an interest in the political possibilities of theatre, such as in the work of Brecht or a Grotowskian re-modelling of the relationship between spectator and actor. Instead, he has focussed himself and the Odin exclusively in the direction of the aesthetic. During the thirty-five years of the Odin's existence, the actors, in working with Barba as their *"guru"* (a role he has played since the outset) have been influenced to the point where they cannot leave his aesthetics behind in their personal

work as will be seen in Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter Two - ISTA

> Different performers, at different places and times and in spite of the stylistic forms specific to their traditions; have shared common principles (Barba and Savarese, 8).

Origins of ISTA

This chapter will examine Barba's creation, the International School of Theatre Anthropology or ISTA. Unlike the Odin Barba makes a pretence at politicization through his comparisons between Third Theatre and the third world, Barba describes ISTA exclusively in aesthetic terms. Inherent in the idea of ISTA is a list of transcultural recurring principles, which will be detailed in this chapter.

In 1979, Eugenio Barba founded the International School of Theatre Anthropology. On the ISTA link for the Odin Teatret's web page, he mentions the UNESCO-sponsored conference of Third Theatres that he directed in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1976. Barba's participation in this event was important because afterwards, Barba was invited to produce a similar initiative in Bonn, Germany. Barba however had his own idea about a different form of conference that he felt would be more

valuable. "I made a counter-proposition: a situation of comparative research with highly skilled masters from different cultures where fifty actors and directors from group theatres could participate" (Barba, web page). He goes on to discuss how he credits some of these "masters" with whom he created the first ISTA session: Toni Cots (Odin Teatret), Sanjukta Panigrahi (India), Katsuko Azuma (Japan), I Made Pasek Tempo (Bali) and Tsao Chun Lin (Taiwan). He also includes scholars like Italian professors Fabrizio Curciani, Franco Ruffini, Nicola Savarese, Ferdinando Taviani and Ugo Volli and French professor Jean-Marie Pradier. He refers to their contribution, and how:

> with openness, dedication and courage [they] trusted and followed me in this unpredictable and still faltering initiative.... With pride and gratitude I consider all of them artists and scholars alike, as the founders of the ISTA tradition (web page).

It is relevant that here Barba equates the involvement of scholars and theatre artists because he often specifies in his writings on the subject that ISTA is very much an artist-based and artist-driven venture. Indeed, he uses the fact that his intended audience is the performer as a justification for his language

choices.

The purpose of Theatre Anthropology is to answer the question, "Where can performers find out how to construct the material bases of their art?" (Barba and Savarese, 8). Barba defines the term "performer" as referring to both actors and dancers. Theatre Anthropology is meant to provide the performer with tools to better do his/her job.

But what brought Barba to this concept of Theatre Anthropology? He claimed that one of the things that first suggested the idea of Theatre Anthropology to him was the work of Asian performers. He says that he wondered why, even during a "cold" demonstration of a form, an Asian performer from a codified tradition still held the spectator's attention so thoroughly. It is important to note that in these descriptions, Barba does not specify forms or cultures of origin but merely applies general descriptions like "Oriental" and "Asian". He claims he discovered, through an intercultural investigation, achieved by watching performances from a number of different styles, that one of the techniques often used by Asian performers was to work with their knees bent, as Barba says:

exactly like the Odin Teatret actors.

> In fact, at Odin Teatret, after some years of training, the actors tend to assume a position in which the knees, very slightly bent, contain the *sats*, the impulse towards an action which is as yet unknown and which can go in any direction.... This was how one of the first principles of Theatre Anthropology, the change of balance, was revealed to me (6).

Here, Barba is demonstrating one of the fundamental tenets of what he terms Theatre Anthropology, the theory of a transcultural aspect to performance. Barba believes that there are a number of principles used by the performer, which are the same in all cultures. This transcultural theory is the basis of ISTA's style of Theatre Anthropology.

In *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, Barba defines how he sees the work of Theatre Anthropology, what it is and is not:

> ISTA's work is a new field of study applied to the human being in an organised performance situation.
>
> The only affinity between ISTA's work and cultural anthropology is the questioning of the obvious (one's own tradition).... Nor should Theatre Anthropology be confused with the anthropology of performance .... Theatre

> Anthropology is the study of the behaviours of the human being when it uses its physical and mental presence in an organised performance situation and according to principles, which are different from those used in daily life. This extra-daily use of the body is what is called technique .... ISTA's field of work is the study of the principles of this extra-daily use of the body and their application to the actor's and dancer's creative work....[ISTA has the objective] of going beyond the specialisations of particular disciplines, techniques or aesthetics (7).

I will try to simplify this statement as - Theatre Anthropology, the work and *raison d'être* of the International School of Theatre Anthropology is not anthropological, but more a study of performance for performers. It is a study that focuses on the various techniques performers use to achieve the same goals, since, according to Barba, performers always have the same goals. The last statement in this definition: "[ISTA has the objective] of going beyond the specialisations of particular disciplines, techniques or aesthetics" (7) suggests that the goal is to de-contextualize various performance forms from their cultural context. Through this process, Barba hopes to

find his "transcultural recurring principles of performance" (7).

He defines how a performer's work develops transculturally, because, in his view, the process is the same in all cultures:

> A transcultural analysis of performance reveals that the performer's work is the result of the fusion of three aspects which reflect three different levels of organisation: 1) The performer's personalities, their sensibilities, their artistic intelligence, their social personae: those characteristics which make them unique and once-only. 2) The particularities of the traditions and socio-historical contexts through which the once-only personality of a performer is manifest. 3) The use of physiology according to extra-daily body techniques. The recurrent and transcultural principles on which these techniques are based are defined by Theatre Anthropology as the field of pre-expressivity (7).

Peggy Phelan discusses Barba's concept of pre-expressivity and exposes its link to a type of psycho-analytic feminism:

> Barba's pre-expressive level...is strikingly similar to what psychoanalytically inclined

> feminists call the "pre-Oedipal stage." In both ideas, there is a kind of Nietzschean romanticism, an ache for one's "best self" which can be seen only by continually turning back, by a continual turn away from the hubbub of competing meanings (108).

Indeed, Barba not only turns away from competing meanings, but even goes so far as to suggest that they are irrelevant. In his insistence on transculturalism, Barba simplifies the vast differences between performance traditions in a serious manner. While he admits that there are certain obvious differences between theatrical forms originating in different cultures, Barba insists that these are not as important as the connections he perceives among them. Thus by concentrating more on his principles than the target culture of his study, Barba manages to universalize all performance forms.

Barba states that through pre-expressivity, the individual performer transcends his/her cultural specificity. Implicit in this assertion are many values and assumptions about the universality of all performance forms in their relationship with the audience. It is also implicit in his idea that the performer, through extra-daily techniques and pre-

expressivity, can erase his/her culture, class and even gender from his/her body.

The Trancultural Principles

In order to discuss the validity of Barba's intercultural theatrical theory, it is imperative to detail that theory, and its applications.

In the first ISTA session, in 1979, Barba said that, "The work and the research confirmed the existence of principles that, on the pre-expressive level, determine scenic presence" (Barba, 7). Barba identifies six recurring principles of performance which are being studied by ISTA: daily and extra-daily behavior; balance in action; the dance of oppositions; consistent inconsistency and the virtue of omission; equivalence; and a decided body.

Daily and extra-daily movement have been defined in Chapter One. Barba specifies that daily or inculturated movement "is conditioned by culture, social status, profession" (15). But in the performance situation, theoretically, inculturated body technique is replaced by acculturated technique which does not respect these habitual uses of the body or these cultural, social or professional limitations. The two main paths to technique - defined as: "forms, manners, behaviour,

procedures, guile, distortions, appearances" (Barba and Saverese, 189) - are inculturation and acculturation. There are two ways to bring inculturation and acculturation together to form technique. The performer can consciously decide or belong to a codified form that inherently requires an acculturated technique. Odin and its training attempts to create a similar situation to that of the performer belonging to a codified tradition. Another option is to transform inculturated technique. For example, Stanislavski used a mental process to transform inculturated movement styles for the stage. The actor uses Stanislavski's "magic if" to transform his/her inculturated behaviour, retaining his/her cultural and social conditioning. Bertolt Brecht, however wanted the actor's inculturated technique to show through at all times so as to help achieve the alienation effect. If the actor is of a different class or even culture than her character, that should always be clear to the observer.

Barba also asserts that "Acting technique which uses variations of inculturation is transcultural"(189). Here he is unaware of the inculturation of the actor into the culture of the company, as well as the cultural context of that company and its effect on this process. He says that, like acculturation performance technique,

where the basic method of training the performer is the same (positions and forms are taught which remove inculturated movement from the body) the way in which inculturated technique is transferred to the stage remains the same transculturally. This method is:

> the performers use their 'spontaneity', elaborating the behaviour which comes to them naturally, which they have absorbed since their birth into the culture and social milieu in which they have grown up (189).

Both of these methods of creating performance technique activate the pre-expressive in the performer, creating their presence on the stage. However, only the acculturated behavior of the actor is relevant to Barba's investigation of Theatre Anthropology and not the inculturated behavior which it replaces. An important question to ask might be how different are the two forms of behavior? Barba does not ask this question as he assumes that all inculturated body techniques are similar enough that they can be generalized as being the same.

Barba discusses his next recurring principle, balance in action: "The characteristic most common to actors and dancers from different cultures and times is the abandonment of daily balance in favour of a

'precarious' or extra-daily 'balance'" (34). This is closely linked to pre-expressivity as: "this extra effort which dilates the body's tensions in such a way that the performer seems to be alive even before he (sic)) begins to express"(34). Indeed, a dynamic balance: "generates the sensation of movement in the spectator even when there is only immobility"(40). Barba points out that performers should be aware of these sensations which are experienced by the spectator as s/he watches the performer's movement. As with other recurring principles, Barba illustrates balance in action with many examples from traditional Asian performance forms.

The next recurring principle of Barba's Theatre Anthropology is what he calls the dance of oppositions. Barba defines energy, the most basic tool of the performer, as: "the consequence of the tension between opposing forces" (12). Furthermore, Barba goes on to state that: "The performer's body reveals its life to the spectator by means of a tension between opposing forces: this is the principle of opposition" (12). Barba claims that opposition is: "the base on which they [Asian performers] construct and develop all their actions"(176). Barba's example of the dance of oppositions comes from Japanese *Noh* theatre:

> The Japanese term which describes...opposing tension is *hippari hai* which means 'to pull something or someone towards oneself while the other person or thing is trying to do the same.' There is...*hippari hai* between the actors and the musicians, who in fact do not play in unison but try to move away from each other, alternately surprising each other, interrupting each other's tempo, yet not going so far apart as to lose the contact, the particular bond which puts them in opposition (12).

To prepare for writing this thesis and in order to comment on Barba's copious use of examples from codified Asian theatrical forms, I decided to take a course in Japanese Theatre. In this course, I viewed numerous videotapes of *Noh* productions. I swiftly found that the unusually slow pace of the acting style, along with my lack of understanding of the text of the performance made the experience somewhat tedious. Professor Sonja Arntzen suggested that if we were to listen to the music, which mostly consisted of percussion, and follow its beat, the action would come alive for us. I tried this method and was surprised to discover that she was correct. Using Barba's terminology, I would say that the tension of the opposition between the musicians and

the actor brings the performance alive for me and gives it its energy at the pre-expressive level.

Next, Barba identifies as the next principle what he calls "consistent inconsistency and the virtue of omission" (Barba, 25). The virtue of omission refers to the tendency in Asian theatre forms, especially in Japanese *Noh*, for the performer to retain some of his energy in his actions. The *Noh* actor uses the concept *tameru* ("to retain") and from this comes *tame*: "the ability to keep energy in, to absorb into an action limited in space the energy necessary to carry out a much larger action"(Barba and Savarese, 14). Consistent inconsistency Barba defines as: "the way of thinking implicit in the practice of extra-daily techniques" (Barba, 26). The performers drops inculturated body techniques when she approaches the stage even for acts which she normally performs in life. This seeming inconsistency is replaced by the consistency of her scenic life, her acculturated body techniques, the culture of the theatre company. The new consistency, while artificial, reveals a certain life on the stage. This can be seen especially in codified forms where there is a clear consistency in the stage conventions as understood by both the performers and the intended audience.

When introducing his next recurring principle, Barba quotes Etienne Decroux: "For art to be...the idea of one thing must be given by another thing"(30). This explains the principle of equivalence, where one action represents another. Barba states: "on stage, the action must be real, but it is not important that it be realistic"(32). The reality of the action is emotional, not mimetic. Equivalence is not imitation, in an equivalent action: "The tension of the [daily] gesture remains, but it is *displaced* into another part of the body"(Barba and Savarese, 96). Therefore, when the actor in the *Noh* play, *Matsukaze,* suggests the action of dipping a pail into the sea to collect brine through a movement of his fan, he displaces the tension of pulling up the large heavy object into another part of his body, by assuming an uncomfortable crouching position and holding it almost completely still. The audience is still able to see the equivalence of the action, which is portrayed through the script, as the actors repeatedly mention dipping brine, as well as through the actor's use of acculturated body techniques. This convention is expected to be understood by the intended audience as consistent inconsistency. I found that because I was familiar with the text of the piece, this equivalent action was highly effective and clear for me.

Finally, Barba says that the decided body is the sixth recurring transcultural principle of performance. Of this concept, Barba says:

> One says, in fact, *essere deciso, être decidé, to be decided.* And this does not mean that someone or something decides for us or that we submit to a decision. Neither does it mean that we are deciding, nor that we are carrying out the action of deciding (Barba, 33).

The performer must know what s/he wants to do exactly. S/he must have the body and mind working together precisely to achieve the decided body. This is clear in the Odin training technique in which the physical score is developed. When I perform my physical score, I create a decided body, as it is clear in my movement that I know exactly what I am doing and going to do at each moment. This shows that Barba is able to create and see his principles in the work that he is so influential upon, that of the Odin. Through ISTA, he looks outside his own theatre culture to locate the principles in different theatre cultures.

Cross-Gender Portrayal

As part of his theory of acculturation techniques,

Barba must address gender as an inculturated behavior which according to him can be erased from the performer's body through training. In many of the Asian theatrical forms which fascinate Barba, cross-gender portrayal is a common convention. On the issue of these portrayals, he states that:

> [The traditional cross-dressed performer] was doing exactly the opposite of what a modern performer usually does when dressed as a person of the opposite sex. The traditional performer is not disguised but divested of the mask of his or her sex in order to allow a soft or vigorous temperament to shine through. This performance temperament is independent of the behaviour pattern to which a man or woman must conform because of the specific culture to which they belong (Barba and Savarese, 20-21).

That is to say that aculturation, the process of ridding the body of its inculturated habits can efface gender, among other "masks" as Barba puts it.

Barba goes on to suggest that cross-gender performances are the most conventionalised forms there are because the performer is inevitably performing the cultural ideal of masculine and feminine.

This would suggest a deliberate turning away from

Barba's early interest in Brecht (although he continues to quote and refer to Brecht even today). Elin Diamond says about Brecht's use of historicization:

> According to Brecht, one way that the actor alienates or distances the audience from the character is to suggest the historicity of the character in contrast to the actor's own present-time self-awareness on stage. The actor must not lose herself in the character but rather *demonstrate* the character as a function of particular sociohistorical relations (Diamond, 87).

Through the process of inculturation, class, gender and culture are written on the body. In a Brechtian production, these inculturated traits would not only be revealed, but showcased. The class, gender and culture of the actor are relevant and they should be explored and presented intertextually with those of the character. According to Barba, however, when acculturation is explored, the performer effaces these inscriptions and inserts those which she wishes to portray instead.

In her book on the Magdalena Project, Susan Bassnet tackles Barba's contention that *animus* and *anima* are not necessarily linked to gender: "Except, of course, that societies do particularise the 'soft' and

'vigorous', and the values that come to be attributed to these qualities tend to be associated with gender roles" (Bassnett, *Magdalena,* 123). I feel this is extremely apparent, especially in the traditional cross-gender performance conventions that are the basis of Barba's theories on the subject. I have observed that although performers such as the *kabuki onnagata* actor - a man who portrays the role of a woman exclusively - may incorporate *animus* or vigorous energy into their characterization, the more feminine and soft *anima* dominates. *Animus* energy acts as the *hippari hai* or dance of oppositions in the *onnagata* role.

Aesthetics vs Politics

Although Barba quotes Brecht's use of historicisation to foreground the cultural context of the actor, he does so only as an aesthetic example. Indeed, he seems to discuss Brecht almost exclusively from an aesthetic viewpoint. He speaks of the celebrations for the 80th anniversary of Brecht's death wherein the Berliner Ensemble produced *The Life of Galileo*. Of this event, Barba says:

> I felt rage towards all those intellectuals from the 'free' countries seated around me, whispering, as if they didn't understand what the performance

> was crying out to them: 'How boring!....It doesn't mean anything anymore!'....Many still ask themselves: 'What is the meaning, today, of making theatre?' .... This is the theatre: an empty and ineffective ritual which we fill with our 'why', with our personal necessity (Barba, 85).

Although Barba rails against these free intellectuals trying to frame Brecht as an artist with no political context, I would argue that this is what Barba himself does with theatre. He has gone from an early excitement about Brecht's message to a hyper-aestheticization of theatre as a form. Barba has filled his own 'why' of theatre with transcultural artistic principles and a professional ethic requiring a marriage to theatre by the performer.

During Odin Week, I saw a film titled *On the Two Banks of the River*, directed by Torgeir Wethal about an Odin trip to Peru in 1978. At this time, the authorities told the Odin actors that theatre performances were not permitted. The film documents how the actors got around this ruling, even at their own personal risk. In the film, the actors' decision to fight the law banning group gatherings or theatre performances seems a political move. They appear to be fighting for the right of free speech, especially when

they approach the presidential palace dressed in their costumes and behaving in character. This action "to present the president with a flower" as they say in the film is obviously political. At the end of the film, when Barba came in to speak to us about it, he specified that, while Odin Teatret may take such political action, that "Odin is a political theatre but nobody should know it" (personal interview). Barba also stated that Odin members choose which countries to tour based on the people that they know in those places and invitations. It was unclear to me why Odin had made the decision to tour Peru, a country where theatre performances are illegal but Barba did specify that this decision was not made for political reasons. Again, the aesthetics of getting around a government crackdown on freedom of expression is more important in this film than the politics thereof.

An important example of the work of ISTA is the 1986 congress titled: *The Female Role as Represented on the Stage in Various Cultures* which was held in Holstebro. This particular congress elicited a great deal of reaction. The first issue that was raised about this congress was simply that of the title. For feminists, "representation" refers to a highly politically charged concept, in which the issue is the

absence of women from the stage. Susan Bassnett pointed out that:

> In many parts of the world women have been forbidden to perform in public; in some cases women have been excluded from the stage after having played on it for centuries; while in other cases they have never been allowed to begin, and consequently female roles have been portrayed by male performers (Bassnett, *Magdalena*, 124).

The important question for Bassnett and the feminist observer becomes why women are portrayed as they are on stage. Concerning the issue of representation, critic Phillip Zarilli observes that:

> Barba never explicitly stated what he meant by 'representation'; however, from the way he organised the working sessions of the congress (primarily as pedagogical demonstration-workshops), from his commentary in the program and during the working sessions, and from previous writing on ISTAs, he obviously thought representation meant how performers (male or female) enact the female role ("Invisible", 95).

This corroborates Bassnett's observations that to Barba "representation," like other issues in theatre has an aesthetic rather than political meaning. Zarilli's

comments reflect my own experience of Barba both from his written work and from my time with the Odin Teatret during Odin Week. Odin Week was set up as a pedagogical program, with the intent of explaining and clarifying the Odin's method of producing plays for theatre professionals. There was an emphasis on understanding the method physically, through physical training, as a performer.

Zarilli goes on to discuss how this issue became an important area of debate throughout the congress, especially for feminist participants:

> Considerable conflict ensued when the only operative definition of representation was Barba's, although feminists often use 'representation' to signal the construction of patriarchal gender codes. What resulted was a 'crisis of representation' precipitated by a congress whose structure precluded free exchange among these varying viewpoints regarding what is enacted (structures and codes as representations), how it is enacted (the act of representing), and how we talk about both of the above (discourse concerning representation) (96).

It can be said that Barba leaves it to some one else to consider the critical issues in a piece as he and his

company produce it purely for aesthetic reasons.

Although I did not attend the 1986 ISTA congress on the female role, it seems that many of the issues I have with Barba's Theatre Anthropology theory were showcased here as critics constantly mention them in their reviews. Zarilli complains that it was clear at the congress that Barba does not:

> [a]cknowledge that even in those traditions where he finds his inspiration there are a great number of performers who fail to achieve the high level of 'presencing' with which Barba is so fascinated. Nor, is there any attempt to articulate precisely how the native performer perceives what Barba receives as 'presence' (102).

In reading Barba's writings on Theatre Anthropology it is clear that he refuses to contextualize any of his "recurring principles" in the cultures he investigates. Barba defends his refusal:

> 'How is it possible to study the performer's creative processes without examining her/his historical and social context? How is it possible to compare various forms of scenic behaviour, isolate recurring principles, without taking into consideration that each of the examples belongs to culturally diverse and at times incomparable

> circumstances?' And (critics) conclude: 'Theatre Anthropology ignores history; it ignores the fact that particular technical procedures have a specific symbolic or idea meaning in the culture to which they belong; it reduces everything to the materiality of scenic *bios*.'
>
> No, Theatre Anthropology does not reduce to ... but concentrates on (Barba, 44).

Barba justifies his transcultural concepts by insisting on their "truth" in the life of the performer. He universalizes all performance forms, particularly those emerging from cultural contexts with which he has little or no familiarity. As one of the great artists of western theatre - a descendant of Stanislavski through Grotowski - Barba feels that he has the artistic knowledge to create these principles and apply them to forms he does not understand.

Language

Another important issue when dealing with Barba and his work is that of language. As is seen in the opening quotation of the introduction, the main difficulty of working with Eugenio Barba from an academic view is his language. Zarilli comments that at the ISTA congress,

Barba used language with a "lyrical suggestiveness...and imagery [which] allows a performer-reader an intuitive grasp of particular aspects of performance. This is the language we often use in the workshop context" ("Invisible", 102-103). This observation became evident to me in my experience of Barba's speech at Odin Week as well as in his written work. It must be considered that his writing is commonly translated, presumably from Italian, his first language. This is not however true of his spoken language. Odin Week was presented in English and all our interviews with Barba were conducted exclusively in English, thus I hold Barba accountable for imprecision in his wording.

Zarilli goes on to point out that while this type of language is useful in the workshop context:

> What becomes problematic is bringing this language unreflexively into a single-voiced discourse, which subsumes and essentializes the Other. Barba's voice remains single, essential, comprehensive, and authoritarian; all that comes before it is subsumed by a practical interest in the qualitative, lyrical dimensions of the performance act. Bits and pieces of anecdotal information solicited from the performances are woven into Barba's lyrical

tapestry (103).

Zarilli is explaining Barba's method of commentary at the ISTA. He claims that Barba would view a demonstration by a participant from a tradition which was different from that of a western European and then discuss how what the performance fit into Barba's transcultural idea of performance. He would not request information from the performer about what his performance meant in his own cultural context but Barba would create his own context and deliver it for the benefit of the observers and performer alike. In the end, Zarilli concludes that the observer's experience is:

> Instead of getting a portrait of 'performance', what we get is Barba's construction of his own view of performance through the Others he studies....What troubles me is the solitary, universalising voice precluding a dialectical process of investigation(103).

It is clear that Barba has no intention of answering the questions he posed above concerning the performer's social context.

Chapter Three - Judith

The Origin of the Play

I will look at a one-woman performance by a female Odin actor, Roberta Carreri, in order to shed some light on the ways that gender can be presented in a universalized aesthetic context and to offer my feminist critique thereof. *Judith* by Roberta Carreri and Eugenio Barba was presented during Odin Week and thus I am in a position to discuss the production.

According to Odin actor Roberta Carreri, the play *Judith* began in 1986 when her daughter started school, and she realized that touring with the rest of the company would no longer be feasible for her. She thought: "Maybe I should make a solo performance?" (Christoffersen, 152). When asked about how she formed the basis for this piece, she focussed mostly on her physical movement and the discoveries she made during training. She discussed how she ended up working in a chair, specifically a lawn chair, and how that affected her work; her work with a Japanese *buto* dancer; and training specifically with the eyes. Carreri demonstrates how she started with a thematic idea and how it developed into material through training:

> when I had to say something about my theme, I said: a woman expecting a child. We began to call the

> woman Mary because Natsu (the Buto dance master) thought of Jesus' mother.
>
> This became the material, which I showed to Eugenio and my other colleagues, when I returned to Holstebro. And after a few months Eugenio said that we could make it into a performance.
>
> We had to find a story. We thought of another Mary, Mary Magdalene ....Eugenio began to think that I needed a relationship with another character in order to create a dramatic situation. There needed [to] be someone for whom I acted, someone in relation to whom I did things .... He thought of Salome, and later of Judith (155-156).

These decisions were reached through observing the physical development of the piece in rehearsals. The decision was made for Carreri to be interacting with a head because Barba thought it should be something close to the floor. From there, Barba drew upon his background as a Christian and his knowledge of the bible and biblical characters to choose a woman (this choice was made because Carreri is female) who was linked in his imagination to a severed head. It is important here to recognize Judith not as a transcultural figure of a woman who deals with death. While Barba, utilizing the universalism of ISTA might suggest that Judith can portray a transcultural concept, she is a specifically

Judeo-Christian character, coming from a particular cultural context. Barba and Carreri reveal their western Christian cultural context in this choice. Perhaps if they had come from a different context, they might have chosen a very different female figure. For example, had the playwrights come from a Japanese cultural context (the culture from which Carreri drew much of her physical work for this piece) they might have chosen a character like the popular *kabuki* character Lady Fuji, reacting in horror to the head of her son and her decision to try to kill the man who was his murderer. While Barba and Carreri might have intended to create a transcultural production, their choices reflect a particular narrative tradition, which deeply influences both the production and the spectator's reaction to it.

Once the decision to portray this particular character from the western Christian tradition was made, Carreri had to define her idea of Judith as she came to understand her through the development of the play:

> One can understand her as a holy woman who executes a ritual and acts in God's name. But one can also see her as a cold calculating woman who in fact falls in love with Holofernes [her victim] and then kills him because she can't resist him.

> So it was as if the profane and the holy melted together...(157).

Indeed, in the production I saw, Judith is an extremely erotic character, interacting sensuously with the head throughout the play. From the grotesque mask of extreme horror when she first uncovers the head, to playfulness as though her lover Holofernes were still alive, Carreri foregrounds the origins of her interpretation of the Judith character. As will be shown, another female biblical figure, Mary Magdalene, was an early element in the creation of Carreri's Judith.

In the program book for the production, Carreri shows how she used visual art as a point of departure for her creation of the character: "[Judith's] face looks out at us from paintings by Botticelli e Regnault, Raffaello and Rubens, Cranach and Klimt: 'sensual and innocent, ecstatic and thoughtful, wilful and surprised" (Barba and Carreri, 3). Carreri lists some of the sources that she used for the development of her material, and among the visual artists she includes O. Gentileschi. This is Orazio Gentileschi, a Caravaggisto, who was a well-established Italian artist in the 16th century. At the close of the century (1593) he had a child, Artemisia. She was the only one of his four children who showed an interest and aptitude for art, so despite her gender, he trained her. I mention

her because she is well known for her series of portraits of Judith so it seems surprising that she was not a more important source for the play. This is particularly surprising due to her close association with her father in art history. It is difficult to find information on Orazio which does not at least mention or include the work of Artemisia. Artemisia was brutally raped by a colleague of her father's as a teen (we know this because Orazio took the unusual move of taking the matter to court) and it is often thought that her violent images of Judith reflect her deep rage at this act. In Artemisia's work, Judith is strong, determined and threatening. To use the phraseology of Theatre Anthropology, Artemisia's Judith shows a great deal of *animus* energy. In a book on her work, Mary D. Garrard discusses Artemisia's Judith paintings:

> In her paintings of Judith Slaying Holofernes, Artemisia appears to have drawn personal courage from her subject, to go farther (sic) than any woman artist had ever gone - or would go, before the twentieth century - in depicting a confrontation of the sexes from a female point of view .... *Judith* inevitably chills us, and it has offended many who commented on it, but not because of its violence .... It offends and shocks because it presents an antisocial illegitimate violence,

> the murder of a man by a woman .... Judith and her servant are, together, the most dangerous and frightening force on earth for man: women in control of his fate. Other works of art show women exercising power over men .... Aretemisia's pictures differ from all of these categorically, including some by women, because she uniquely has given imaginative life to a fully antipatriarchal female character. In narrow iconographic terms, her Judith is the heroic and strong defender of her people. In metaphoric terms, however, she symbolizes female defiance of male power (Garrard, 279-280).

I maintain that any proper researcher would find it exceedingly difficult to encounter Orazio Gentileschi's work without finding that of his daughter. As well, I argue that not including her work in an overview of visual art about Judith is a great and significant oversight. It seems clear to me that Carreri and Barba did not wish to be affected by the unusual strength of her work as it would probably have created a very different vision of Judith. They did not wish to see the vision that Garrard describes.

In her examination of the character of Judith, Carreri raises questions about what drove Judith to take the action she did, to take a man's job and kill:

> But what secret lies behind her act which has gripped the imagination of artists from generation to generation, from century to century? Is it patriotism...? Is it faith, converted to action...? Is it eroticism, in the drama with neither reconciliation nor hope, as imagined by Friedrich Hebbel, who saw Judith as married and yet a virgin by divine will, her sensuality awakened by Holofernes, to whom she gives herself and then kills him to avenge her abused femininity?
>
> Or is Judith young, rich and beautiful, courted and vain? (Barba and Carreri, program, 3)

Then, Carreri goes on to answer these questions for her version of the character, to illustrate her decision as actor and playwright about how the character reacts and why:

> But it was not patriotism that drove her. It was love, for Holofernes. She kills so that time will not be able to weaken their perfect mutual passion. She professes this to her compatriots along with a wish to die and be reunited with Holofernes. But an archangel sent by God reveals the truth: it was divine wrath that killed Holofernes. The young woman and her love were merely the instruments of God. Judith must live out the role that god has created for her (3).

In making this decision, Carreri has created in Judith the position of object rather than subject. She has taken the power from the strong character and made Judith completely subject to the will of God, but even more so, to the power of her love for Holofernes. How it is that Judith can fall in love with the man responsible for the death of her people? Carreri quotes from the apocryphal *Book of Judith* in her program book: "And so the siege began, which led the inhabitants of Bethulia to be denied water. Children started to faint; women and youngsters died of thirst"(1). It seems amazing that Judith could bring herself to love the man responsible for this. Carreri explains this away as the will of God. Indeed, Judith seems to have no will of her own in Carreri's vision. In the apocryphal version, even as quoted by Carreri in her program, this does not appear to be the case: "The situation became known to Judith...who said: 'I want to accomplish a deed that will pass to the children of our country from generation to generation'"(1) and:

> Judith said to her fellow citizens: 'Praise the Lord, praise Him in a loud voice, because tonight He has struck our enemies with a woman's hand.' She took the head out of the bag and showing it said: 'this is Olophernes' head, supreme commander of the Assyrian army. He came with a great army of

warriors to slay the young with a sword, to crush infants on the ground, and take young children as prey. But the Lord has protected me, because Holophernes did not die at the hands of strong men but rather Judith struck him with the beauty of her face.'

Judith gave freedom to her favourite servant, and after having purified herself retired to her home. But the women of Bethulia gathered and composed a dance in her honour and Judith, singing a song of gratitude, led the dance (2).

This is clearly a very different version of the story from the one created by Carreri, yet she was not only familiar with the apocryphal version, but quotes it in her program book for reference by the spectator.

Perhaps the answer to this seeming contradiction lies in Barba's principle of opposition. Regarding this principle, Barba states: "According to the opposition principle, if one wants to go to the left, one begins by going to the right, then suddenly stops and turns left" (Barba and Saverese, 176).

The Production

It is important in discussing the play to consider my experience of the production itself, which first brought me to make the decision to include it in

this thesis. When I saw this production, I was stunned. It is a virtuosic tour-de-force in which Carreri demonstrates her considerable acting skill. The actress' physical presence is at a high point of tension throughout the long piece. There is never a moment when Carreri allows the energy to drop. This was something I noticed in all the Odin performances I saw. Carreri demonstrates the Eurasian quality of her performance style by concentrating on forms rarely seen in Western theatre, such as the extensive use of the eyes. It was clear to me as I watched the production that Carreri had trained that part of her body as much as any other in the creation of this piece. Indeed, she says as much herself as she describes the training that eventually led to the material for *Judith*:

> I begin to work with my eyes by focussing on ... very dramatic images....I did not begin working with ... jungle images in order to obtain a particular effect with the eyes....But...I was conscious of the fact that the audience would thereby experience more life in my eyes. So training is always a balance between the conscious and the coincidental (Christoffersen, 152).

Carreri's work with the eyes caused an electrifying effect on me as a spectator. I, being a North American theatregoer, have never seen this sort of thing in

performance before and the imagery was unusual and exciting. At one point in the play, Carreri places her hand on her forehead, pulling back her eyelids and rolls her eyes back into her head so that only the whites are showing. This seemed to me to be a kind of religious ecstasy. It is this image that Odin Teatret chose to represent the play featuring a sketch of it on the poster and cover of the program book. Just as Carreri and Barba used images of Judith to create this piece, they now create their own image of her to represent the piece. The Odin Judith is a woman in the throes of religious ecstasy, not acting on her own will. It is a safer image for a patriarchal society such as the one Odin exists in and relies upon for audience and financial support.

In the text of the play, the opposition between Judith as a subject, as seen in the apocryphal *Book of Judith* and Judith as object in the love-lorn portrayal of Barba and Carreri's text is clear. In the text of the play, Barba and Carreri use a quotation from the apocryphal book which shows Judith taking responsibility for her actions, asking God for help in the strong action she has decided to make for her own reasons:

> Lord of Heaven and Earth,
> of all things visible and invisible,
> creator of the waters,

infuse this widow with the courage to do what she has decided.

Confound the violence of those that make cruel plans
against her people.

Shatter their arrogance with a woman's hand (Barba and Carreri, Ms.,9).

This piece of text clarifies that the decision is Judith's and that she is merely praying for the strength to carry through on this act.

Elsewhere in the play, as Judith speaks in the words of Barba and Carreri, another version of this figure is seen:

Despite everything I hungered after a meaning to my life.

And now I know that the sails must be unfurled and accept destiny's winds
wherever they impel the ship (10).

Here the image of Judith giving into fate is very clear. This passage contrasts sharply with the above, although they are spoken by the actress quite closely together. Again the dance of oppositions is clear, as is the decision to include Judith as subject but to choose to portray the objectified version of the character.

The language in the piece is extremely erotic, as is the action. Both Barba and Carreri express their

image of Judith as "seductive" and "unable to resist Holophernes" in various personal interviews and these images are very much in evidence in the production. Within the text of the play, Barba and Carreri intertwine the sacred aspect of Judith with their erotic reading of the character in a "prayer": "In the name of the pupils that I fix with mine/and of the lips that I kiss,/now and for ever"(12). As well as the image of the erotic Judith appearing in the text, a great deal of Carreri's action on the stage also reflects this eroticism. Her behaviour is especially erotic in her interaction with the severed head of Holophernes. She places the head between her legs, plays with its hair with her toes, and later brings it up across her body, clearly showing that this is the head of her lover. Carreri and Barba's is the only sexualized version of Judith I have encountered. Predictably, the eroticism is exclusively of a heterosexual nature. Although Carreri is interacting with a head and not the man himself, his presence is implicit in her actions. At one point, she holds the head up beside her and the background music is church bells, ironically evoking the image of a bride and groom. The female servant who is so important in most renderings of the Judith story is all but non-existent in this play. Homoeroticism is completely denied in this production.

In the end, Barba and Carreri have taken the story of a Jewish patriotic heroine and made her into an erotic victim of love and religious ecstatic who must act despite herself. Thus what is represented in *The Book of Judith* as an act of courage and strength becomes one of unwilling destruction of the impossible object of desire. I can see clearly why Barba and Carreri made the choices they did with this character because of their conventional gender bias that these choices would be the most dramatically compelling. To put Judith in the position of unwilling participant in God's plan implies a clear conflict. So, despite the fact that the actress is only interacting with a severed head as her partner in the piece, she has something against which to struggle; her own fate. There is a definite narrative structure to the text and action, although as per Barba's caveat, the action does not illustrate the text literally. Thus the piece remains unrealistic, also one of Barba's aesthetic requirements. Carreri's physical action employs many conventions from Asian theatre such as the *kabuki mie,* a moment when the actor playing the lead male character stops the action at the height of tension in a scene and holds himself in a tableau with his eyes crossed to emphasize the climax in energy that occurs at that moment. This implies a male climactic narrative which, despite its non-realistic nature, is

basic to the structure of Barba and Carreri's *Judith*. It was clear to me for the reasons I have outlined and also from my personal experience of the production, that *Judith* is a triumph of high art. However, it is not such a triumph for feminism as seen in my criticism above.

Barba has successfully enforced his aesthetic priority not only on this piece but also on the actress, Roberta Carreri. In her more than twenty years of work with the Odin Teatret, Carreri has absorbed Barba's aesthetics to the point where she now exemplifies them. Like the other Odin actors, Carreri shows an amazing capacity for creating scenic presence, but a limited understanding of gender critique.

Chapter Four - Dona Musica's Butterflies

Julia Varley and Dona Musica

In contrast to Roberta Carreri's *Judith*, I found Julia Varley's one-woman show *Dona Musica's Butterflies* a much more cerebral piece. At the Odin Teatret's Odin Week, I also saw a production of *Dona Musica's Butterflies* by Julia Varley and Eugenio Barba, featuring Varley, herself. Varley discusses the creation of this production in the program book:

> I have worked in theatre for a quarter of a century, but few are the characters I have represented.... Among these characters are those who exist only for the production for which they were created and those that continue to live independently from the context in which they were born. There are characters with whom I wanted to say something and characters who made me say what I did not know. There are characters that live with me only two or three years and others that have remaine[d] beside me now for twenty years.
>
> The independent characters, those that refuse to die with their performance, take their destiny in hand and decide for

> themselves. They guide me towards situations, writings, performances that I - the actress - no longer determine. It is as if they have taken power.... In *Dona Musica's Butterflies* one of the threads of the story is the dialogue between the character, the actress and Julia.... I cannot be only one person (Varley and Barba, 1-2).

Dona Musica, created for the Odin play, *Kaosmos*, and deriving her name from a poem, *Le Soulier de Satin* by Paul Claude, became one of the characters who gained her own life, above and beyond the pieces for and in which she was created. As well as Dona Musica's own presence and input into this production, Varley has woven in another thread: *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjov Capra. Concepts from this text affected the play:

> It is difficult to understand and accept that reality is a tendency to exist, that it goes backwards and forwards in time, that it is composed of waves and particles simultaneously. But that a character could have these qualities seems logical, at least to me who has worked in theatre for years (2-3).

Performance vs Theatre

Varley has outlined the central relationship in the play as being among character, actor and the actor's non-performing self. Once again, the actor's primacy over the spectator is seen, as is often the case in the Odin Teatret. But here the process is highlighted more clearly than in *Judith*. *Judith* is very much a finished and polished product, while *Dona Musica* is a description of process framed in a performance structure. Indeed, Varley asks:

> But can a theatre performance narrate the birth and the development of a character that already is theatre? I still ask myself this question. But if *Dona Musica's Butterflies* is not a performance, what else is it, how else could it be called? (1)

This is an important question, both for Varley and the critic. In her article "Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified", Josette Féral discusses the difference between performance and theatre. She specifies that in performance, the performance space: "no longer surrounds and encloses the performance, but like the body, becomes part of the performance to such an extent that it cannot be distinguished from it. It is the

performance" (173). It can easily be said of Varley's piece that the space cannot be separated from the performance itself. Varley has created Dona Musica's garden, not so much a literal garden but a closed-in space, delineated by a circle, with occasional white silk roses placed in a position which emulates a growing flower around the circle. Lights glow inside the roses, illuminating the space. Dona Musica's first words in the play create the space for the spectator: "this is my garden, I live here, amongst flowers and butterflies" (Varley and Barba, 9). Féral goes on to state that in performance: "there is neither past nor future, but only a continuous present - that of the immediacy of things, of an action taking place" (173). Again this is clear in *Dona Musica* where the narrative thread is so thin as to be non-existent. The only sense of past is when Dona Musica speaks in the past tense of her inception, her creation. At the same time, though Varley undermines this illusion of past and future in the text: "I go forwards and backwards in time, just like those particles which leap and dance in an atom"(Varley and Barba, 15).

While some of Féral's theories seem to fit into what Varley is doing in *Dona Musica*, suggesting in

fact that this is more performance than theatre, according to her definitions, other aspects of her theory are at odds with the basic Odin ideas of theatre. For example, Féral attempts to explain the relationship between performance and theatre:

> If one judges from everything that has thus far been said about performance, it certainly seems difficult to ascertain the relationship between theatre and performance.... That relationship would even seem to be, of necessity, one of exclusion .... performance is not a formalism. It rejects form, which is immobility (Féral, 175).

But, Barba argues strongly that this is not the case, that theatrical forms which are based on set *katas* such as *Noh* (he uses the term "codified" to describe these forms) are extremely open and are freeing for the performer.

To finally answer Varley's question, I would still classify *Dona Musica* as theatre not performance, as Féral defines these terms. The main reason for this lies in this description of theatre by Féral:

> In contrast to performance, theatre cannot keep from setting up, stating, constructing, and

> giving points of view: the director's point of view; the author's towards the action, the actor's towards the stage, the spectator's towards the actor. There is a multiplicity of viewpoints and gazes, and "density of signs" (to quote Barthes) (178).

While Varley does subvert some of the more restrictive aspects of Féral's definition of theatre, such as those dealing with narrative and the presence of the performer appearing as herself on the stage, her *Dona Musica* cannot avoid the above description. The mark of Barba as the director is extremely clear as is that of Varley and Barba working together as playwrights, as is that of Varley as the actor. The main point of departure here is that Varley showcases these relationships, these points of view. She tears away the curtains and backdrop to reveal the actor taking off her costume and makeup at the end of the play in a Brechtian moment of alienation effect.

Barba's Influence

Varley explains how Barba's point of view affected the play in his capacity as director in the program book, for the benefit of the spectator:

> The director has also found his place in the dialogue between the character the actress and Julia. He is the one who manages to enhance that sense of humour that everyone recognizes as mine. He is the external eye that decides what to cut away and corrects the timing, that does not forgive mistakes and is not understanding towards weaknesses, that tries to dilate the multiple meanings and strives to find new solutions.... Even though Dona Musica makes fun of him and jokes about the misunderstandings between them, she is conscious that happiness comes exactly when the director forgets to look upon the work as something to correct and becomes just a visionary spectator (3).

Barba's influence and almost dictatorial position is shown in her language. She speaks of "not forgiving mistakes, not being understanding toward weaknesses," etc. She expresses the "happiness" of making Barba the ideal spectator and intended audience for her play. This matches Zarilli's complaints about Barba's egocentric understanding of Theatre Anthropology. Apparently, he has successfully taught this point of view - his

- to the Odin Teatret actors just as he attempts to do at ISTA conferences.

Varley's Influence

Having argued that Varley has not escaped from Barba's theatricality, I will show that *Dona Musica* can best be understood as her attempt to reveal the contradictions of balancing her desire to create performance art against his (and her) formal aesthetics. It is this revelation of the irreconcilable tensions between these factors which makes the piece so interesting, as Varley raises the questions about the nature of theatre again and again.

In describing the butterfly metaphor in the play she ponders:

> The study of the transformation of the caterpillar to chrysalis and of the chrysalis to butterfly belongs to that level of reality considered to be knowable.... it is the same transformation that Julia, the actress and the character would like to reveal by presenting that secret and private moment which does not belong to the stage, when the costume and make-up are taken off. The intention is precisely

> to enter that mysterious area giving up theatricality, action and play, to touch on the vulnerability of a butterfly that only has twenty-four hours of life (3).

An actor trained in a specific view of the theatre - the Odin hyper-aesthetic - she is apparently trying to break out of this chrysalis and is openly flirting with Féral's performance form.

Throughout the play, Varley questions the relationships between actor, character and play. So too the question of the spectator's importance as critic is brought into focus as Dona Musica asks the spectator:

> How was I born? Did the actress give me life? Or did I, a character, reveal the actress? Did the actress mould her energy so as to transform it into Dona Musica? Or did I, Dona Musica, modulate the actress's energy? (9)

In her article, "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory - Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism", Elin Diamond states:

> I would suggest that feminist theory and Brechtian theory need to be read intertextually, for among the effects of such a reading are a recovery of the radical potential

> of the Brechtian critique and a discovery, for feminist theory, of the specificity of theatre (82).

Varley uses a Brechtian-style alienation effect in this play, which prevents the spectator from suspending disbelief and falling for the fiction of the play. Diamond goes on to state that, "demystifying representation, showing how and when the object of pleasure is made, releasing the spectator from imaginary and illusory identifications - these are crucial elements in Brecht's theoretical project" (83). However for both Brecht and Diamond, the alienation effect is meant to put the spectator in a position of questioning their political assumptions.

Unfortunately, Varley, could not get further than breaking down the fourth wall to bring the spectator into the world of the actor. Ultimately she seems to have an aesthetic, rather than political goal in her play. Again, the influence of Barba is clear as it was in the choices that Carreri made in *Judith*.

So too she questions issues of absolute truth and reality. In the teasing voice of Dona Musica, she discusses imaginary forms of butterflies and

pokes fun at Barba. In the introduction in the program book, Varley blames this behaviour on Dona Musica:

> The director wanted at the end of the performance a room invaded by butterflies....What kind of butterflies did the director want?
>
> Did he want the Heidi-heidi? The Heidi-heidi always flies behind something. People can turn around as much as they like, but it will always be behind their back and that is why no-one has ever seen it (11).

By creating this and several other such stories, Varley questions scientific "fact" and tells the spectator that s/he should also question his/her own reality. Varley is utilizing Brechtian techniques so exactly that she seems to be quoting them. Diamond says:

> Realism disgusted Brecht not only because it dissimulates its conventions but because it is hegemonic: by copying the surface details of the world it offers the illusion of lived experience, even as it marks off only one version of that experience. This is perhaps why the most innovative women playwrights

> refuse the seamless narrative of conflicting egos in classic realism (87).

Indeed, Varley has refused the seamless narrative of classic realism through her use of anti-realistic conventions in *Dona Musica*.

Gender

But while she raises questions about the nature of theatre itself she cannot be said to have included an analysis of gender relations in her deconstruction. This lack of attention was most obvious in her choice of costume. Dona Musica's costume, unlike Judith's, is not erotic, but extremely feminine. Varley describes the costume as she is wearing it (having already removed the wig) in front of the audience within the text of the play:

> The director had said to the actress: I would like you to do a very old character. Julia bought the wig and found in her father's attic a night-dress in black silk and a silver embroidered Arab cape .... The costume - from the consistency of the clothes to the hair-do, from the shoes to the jewelry - is one of the character's most evident tendencies, something

which transforms and is transformed (Varley and Barba, 15).

It is clear in her description that femininity has been equated with female old age in these costume choices. Varley specifies this femininity as being of extreme importance to the creation of this character as well as to the spectator's understanding of her. Dona Musica also speaks with a high, feminine, singsong voice. Varley is particularly known at the Odin Teatret for her vocal abilities. She was the one who was chosen to instruct us in vocal training. Varley does not stop to examine the values implicit in these characterizations and representations, she merely examines them as interesting phenomena, seemingly outside of herself. They exist on an aesthetic level for her exclusively.

An excellent example to illustrate this lack of awareness about gender is found in a work demonstration given by Varley during Odin Week. We participants attended work demonstrations in which the aim was to foreground the process of development. Julia Varley was working on a one-woman piece entitled *My Dead Brother*. Originally in the process of development of the piece, she used a

very feminine costume, a pink blouse and satiny pink skirt with coloured ribbons sewn on it. She showed us how this costume and props such as a rose and a blindfold (these props were both suggested by Barba) had been worked into and had affected her physical score. The costume had been Varley's creation. (Indeed, she mentioned creating another extremely feminine costume, a dress made of flowers as part of her material for the first rehearsal of the play *Mythos*). As Varley and Barba worked with the physical score, the requisites and the text which Varley had chosen (a series of poems) they discovered that something was not working.

Varley reluctantly considered changing the costume. Odin was on tour at the time and she saw a man's suit on sale. She decided to buy it and try it with the work-in-progress. She found it really brought the piece together. For instance, she put the rose in her buttonhole, which completely changed the tone of the physical score with the rose. Whereas in the early extremely feminine costume, it had looked as though the rose was a gift from a lover, in the buttonhole of a man's suit, it became a sign of masculine gentility. At the point in the score when Varley throws the rose onto the ground,

the meaning changed drastically. With the feminine costume, this action had suggested anger at spurned love. With the masculine costume, it suggested to me anger at the political situation spoken of in the poem. The last poem that Varley chose is very political in nature, addressing the difficulty of living in a third world country where the police are one's enemies. Specifically, it speaks to leaving behind one's pregnant wife, the feelings of pride for her pregnancy, and the fear of arrest. When I asked Varley about the choice of a masculine costume, she admitted that it did suggest but did not fully impersonate the male gender. However, she did not go on to the next step, which would be to investigate how this choice affects the spectator politically.

While Varley saw that she was playing with gender, she simply did not discuss or apparently even consider the implications of this. Again, the area of concern and interest for her was to create an interesting aesthetic experience for the spectator, with no thought of the politics of representation. How would Varley's drag-style costume affect the way this performance was perceived by the spectator? What effect did the

man's suit have on the meaning of the poem in which the speaker describes walking with immense pride next to his very pregnant wife? Why did Varley not attempt to impersonate a man? These questions remain unanswered because they are unasked by Varley or Barba.

This profound lack of interest in issues of gender seems like a contradiction, in light of the fact that Varley is involved in a group which focuses on the issue of women in theatre, the Magdalena Project. Indeed, Varley is more than a participant in Magdalena, she has: "collaborated closely on the organisation of Magdalena form its beginnings" (Bassnet, *Magdalena*, 49). Magdalena began in Cardiff, Wales when an all-woman conference on theatre titled Magdalena '86 was staged. At that time, the organizers created a manifesto for their project. Included in this manifesto was an explanation of their planned creation of a theatre piece:

> we don't know what the piece will be about...we do know it won't be led by a single creative vision but will attempt a collective piece woven from strands made by the individual women during the process of work here in Wales (35).

Varley was later to speak about the lack of a director in this project and how this affected her:

> Because it was only women, the need to discover, to question was overwhelming. It created a common solidarity which used the big differences in experience, style, character, colour, to go deeper into questions. There could not be a winning statement, because no one was interested in hearing or uttering it (79).

This attention to women's issues of course is the opposite of what happens in the Odin where the "winning statement" is always that of Eugenio Barba. While speaking of *My Dead Brother*, Varley mentioned trying to get Barba's attention to get him to work on the piece with her and more than one of the actors used the word "allow" when they were discussing what Barba would and would not accept from them.

The Brechtian gestus is meant to make the spectator see the politics implicit in the play and apply these to his/her own life. In the end, the Brechtian gestus which Varley seems to employ in fact shows her own assumptions rather than those of

the spectator. Diamond states that the feminist gestus:

> ... would "alienate" or foreground those moments in a playtext in which social attitudes about gender could be made visible. It would highlight sex-gender configurations as they conceal or disrupt a coercive or patriarchal ideology (Diamond, 91).

In Varley's case, however, it is the power politics of the Odin Teatret itself that are foregrounded, as are Varley's own gender assumptions. As the spectator, I find myself looking on curiously in an attempt to find a greater social meaning for the play.

> Most of us need to practice a much greater degree of reflexivity in our approaches to performance enactment and process. If Barba did so he could speak much more clearly about the experience and poetics of performance practice - the central issue of his concern (Zarilli, "Invisible", 104).

Conclusion

In the Introduction, there was a promise of a feminist interpretation of Eugenio Barba's work. I have managed to include such an interpretation, primarily in my discussion of the work of Carreri and Varley. Despite this attempt, there is little feminist theory applied to the work of these two actors either. In the end, feminist criticism was not the main thrust of this work. This was largely due to the difficulty of applying theory which is based on the notion that the personal is the political to work which is based on the notion that the purely aesthetic can transcend and subsume the political. The two notions are so far distant as to be almost mutually exclusive. I have shown that in his theories regarding transcultural performance, Barba obscures his own western European value system

by arguing that he has transcended all inculturation. His personal biases regarding gender specifically have been applied to the work of the Odin to such a degree that they are the basis of the company's aesthetic.

There are signs, particularly in Varley's *Dona Musica's Butterflies* that she feels some constraints within this rigid aesthetic system. In Varley's comparison between Barba and the caterpillar who doesn't want to make the change into a butterfly in the play she seems to be insinuating that he is refusing change. Despite this realization on her part, she chooses to continue to work within his chrysalis. Like my situation in writing this thesis, she finds herself unable to put her political and feminist ideas from Magdalena together with Barba's patriarchal concepts.

One of Barba's most important influences was his discovery of *kathakali*. Its professional ethic of regarding the theatre life as vocation, as well as its basis in *guru*-style training changed Barba's ideas about theatre completely. He created for himself a *guru* position within the Odin, even as he declared his intention to free the actor from the director. Barba romanticizes the hierarchical

nature of the *guru*-student relationship in his work, emphasizing its reciprocal nature.

When I left Odin Week in Holstebro, after a grueling schedule of ten-hour days at the theatre and an almost complete immersion in the culture of Odin, I wrote down my impressions of the company:

> "Beautiful" is a word often heard around Odin Teatret. They show 20-year-old films of training and hold seminars called "The tradition of Odin". Keen participants eagerly take notes (including myself). Odin Week is like a pilgrimage for fans of Odin. People come more than once ("Impressions").

There is something museum-like about the Odin. Barba mentions that this was one of the criticisms by the "free intellectuals" of the Berliner Ensemble anniversary that he attended. To fight against this possibility, the actors and Barba speak of "struggling" to do something new and fresh in their plays.

I would have to say that although some of these people have worked together now for thirty-five years, they still manage to do something new with each production. In one case, a production titled *Inside the Skeleton of the Whale* took its physical

score from another earlier production, *Kaosmos*, and created a new context for it. *Kaosmos* could no longer be performed due to the retirement of several actors. *Inside the Skeleton of the Whale* is a very different production from *Kaosmos*, which I saw on film. There are different characters, a different narrative line, different costumes and props. *Inside the Skeleton of the Whale* is a testament to the ability of Odin to constantly create something new.

Despite the company's continuing resourcefulness, the base of their work is limited to Barba's apolitical aesthetic vision. As a result, their work lacks any significant political statement for the spectator. Barba hoped that the *kathakali* professional ethic would be enough of a message for the Odin to portray but while fascinating and aesthetically rich and even beautiful, I found something empty about the experience of an Odin performance. I often found myself asking the question "why?" as I watched a production. For me, this question was never answered by Barba.

It may seem a curious thing for a Canadian theatre student to be choosing an Italian director

as the subject for her thesis, especially when it is considered that I had never seen an Odin production at the time that I chose this topic. I discovered the work of Eugenio Barba through a Canadian theatre company, indeed, a company from my hometown of Winnipeg. That company founded by former Odin member and Canadian Richard Fowler was called Primus Theatre. Primus was originally termed the Canadian Project when it was begun in the 1980's. When he left Odin, Fowler returned to Canada, and settled in Winnipeg, where he started his own theatre company. When I first saw a Primus production, *Alkoremmi* in 1991, I was extremely excited. I had never seen theatre quite like this production. The company had created an unusual stage space where I sat on the floor on a mat and there was a strong ritualistic aspect to the play. The lighting was subdued and created by candles. The behavior of the actors was very non-realistic and strangely different. There were feats of exceptional ability; such as, the moment when an actor on stilts leapt up from the floor to a standing position in mere seconds. Being so close to the floor and feeling as though the stilts missed my head by mere inches, the moment was especially thrilling for me. The aesthetic qualities

of this performance including the amazing feats accomplished by the young, fit actors struck me. During my undergraduate degree, I was given the topic of Eugenio Barba's influence on Primus as an optional subject for a paper. I was so impressed with the work of Primus that I chose this topic. This was how I discovered the work of Barba. I remember citing Barba as the major influence on Primus but after preparing this thesis, I find that Primus' work process was apparently much more democratic and group-oriented than the Odin's. While Fowler acted in a similar capacity to Barba as director, I see no references in my interview with Primus member, Ker Wells to Fowler "allowing" or disallowing the actors to do anything. An emphasis on group work, a feeling that decisions are mostly made together is stressed in Wells' interview. Primus engaged in barter and training, like Odin and utilized Barba's recurring principles but remained as I stated at the time, "very much its own entity" (Bitney, "Primus", 7). Primus unfortunately disbanded in May of 1998. Fowler moved to Italy with his Italian wife and the actors took up residences in other cities, some of them continuing acting and others not.

I left the Odin Teatret somewhat sad, as I realized I was seeing the last few years of the company. The actors are in their 50's-60's now and no new actors are being recruited. Many of the company members have retired and it is only a matter of time before the Odin will become defunct. Barba addressed this issue during Odin Week with regret and resignation. He agreed that Odin should end before it becomes staid and boring, which is the worst sin for theatre according to Barba. Furthermore, as recently as 1990, Odin was inspiring new companies such as Primus to create exciting theatre. As a student and practitioner of theatre, I find this to be Odin's greatest and most enduring legacy.

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